

Education Committee

SUPPORT: Executive Budget Charter School Per Pupil Increase & SB 948, SB 949, and SB 886.

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Dear Lawmakers,

Thank you to the members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to speak with you today on an issue that is very important to me.

My name is Claudia Phillips. My family and I have been residents of Bridgeport for approximately two decades now. I am a parent to three children who attended traditional, magnet and public charter schools in my city. I have been advocating vigorously for educational equity in our state for the past 12 years.

February 10th was a moment of great joy when I heard the Governor announce his budget proposal for an increase to our charters. It took me back to the many moments we have come before our state elected officials to appeal for equity in funding for our children in public charter schools. I felt so much gratitude to all those who have stood by us and fought for what is right and not what is popular- those that have heard the voices of families and children in our communities. While I know we still have work to do, I want to say thank you, thank you, thank you.

Recently I was meditating on the fight for civil rights throughout our history in America, and it struck me that for years since the inception of our public charters in CT. The basic rights of black, brown and minority children in marginalized communities like mine have had their basic rights to a quality education that meets their needs and equitable funding taken away from them by a State that has chosen to support an unequal educational system. Let's let that sink in, it's appalling.

I am a proud hard working Mexican American married to an equally hard working upstanding man of color-we have been blessed with 3 children that through grit, determination and the education/culture provided by a wonderful charter in my city are now college students. My son who has learning disabilities, is now in his first year of college at Sacred Heart University pursuing a degree in electrical engineering, my twin daughters are seniors in their last semester of college at Boston College and Bucknell University both majoring in psychology.

I want to share that parents don't care about public charters, public traditional or other forms of public schools. They care about schools that are going to meet the needs of their children. Keep them safe, inspire greatness in them... our charters have, and continue to do this for our sons and daughters.

While I hear the arguments without merit of those that oppose a mother like me, and thousands of other families like mine - having the choice of a public charter school for our children. We live in poor communities plagued with pervasive educational/opportunity gaps - which I will emphasize were here decades before public charters were ever part of the educational landscape. My message to them is, let's work to provide educational opportunities for all kids - they deserve a fighting chance! Parents in my community are not going to buy into the us versus them when it comes to our schools, it's about what works for our kids.

That leads me to my final point, let's come together and fight for justice and equity for all of Connecticut children. Let's make sure all children are equally funded based on their needs. Let's make sure we come away from divisive rhetoric that only hurts our most vulnerable, yet our most deserving black brown and minority beautiful children that are breaking glass ceilings and opening doors like never before!

I thank you for your leadership and ask you to stand for all of Connecticut children in this legislative session.

Thank you,
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